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FM AMEMBASSY VILNIUS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000174

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AMEMBASSY MINSK SENDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2019
TAGS: [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: RFG: NATO-BELARUS SECURITY AGREEMENT

REF: USNATO 114

Classified By: Jonathan Moore, Charge, Embassy Minsk,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Embassy Minsk hereby offers its views assist with
preparation of the guidance requested reftel.

12. (C) As is known, one year ago, the GOB forced the
reduction of U.S. diplomatic staff by 90%, declaring among
others the Defense Attache persona non grata. We no longer
have an American military presence. Although we have
retained one local employee, and post's RSO plays an informal
role tracking military matters, the MOD has not reached out
to post in any way since May 2008.

13. (C) While it is true that Interior Ministry and
Belarusian KGB forces are responsible for acts taken against
public protestors, the military is now directly involved in
repression for the first time. Unfortunately, earlier this
year, the General Staff complied with the regime's demands
to forcibly conscript three young political activists despite
concerns for the health of two of them and the fact that
unlike other conscripts their studies were suspended early
for political reasons. One of the three was operated on when
post-induction exams confirmed a medical problem. Most
recently, in March, the General Staff denied a local
commander's approval to award a high school
graduation-equivalent document to one of the three conscripts
in question. (Comment: As a separate topic, NATO IS members,
during a recent visit to Minsk, noted that Belarus was not
crucial for transit to Afghanistan as Ukraine could be used
instead. End comment.)

14. (C/NF) Post acknowledges that there can be merit in
engaging with the Belarusian military and confirms that some
important, positive steps have been made on the human rights
front. However, in post's opinion, possible actions to
build on those steps and encourage others should be discussed
as part of the USG interagency review of the further status
of sanctions, expected in May, and should not be dictated by
other issues in the interim.

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